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QUESTION OF PALESTINE

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fiftieth year

Letter dated 17 January 1995 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I wish to express the greatest concern at the growing Israeli settlement activity in the occupied West Bank in recent months.

On 17 September, Agence France-Presse reported that the Israeli Housing Ministry had given the green light for the construction of 1,050 new housing units in the West Bank settlement of Betar, south of Bethlehem. According to the same source, the Ministry announced that thousands more houses would be built in the West Bank along the pre-1967 cease-fire line with Israel, "effectively ending a building freeze announced by Prime Minister Rabin shortly after he returned to power in June 1992".

The November issue of Israeli Settlement, a Washington-based bimonthly publication of the Foundation for Middle East Peace, reported that as at 1 November 1994, 3,900 new housing units had been completed in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and that 15,000 units were planned to be constructed through 1997 in the "Greater Jerusalem" settlements of Maaleh Adumim and Givat Zeev, north and east of Jerusalem. According to The Christian Science Monitor of 4 January 1995, another 80,000 settlers would be settled on expropriated Arab land in Jerusalem and its environs.

On 22 December 1994, the daily Ha'aretz reported that settlers from Efrat had started preparation work for the establishment of a new settlement, Givaat Tamar, on nearby land confiscated from the West Bank village of El-Khadr south of Bethlehem. The same newspaper reported on 1 January 1995 that 200 dunums of land belonging to Kufr El-Labad near Tulkarm had been confiscated by

the military authorities to be used for the expansion of the Jewish settlement of Avnei Khefetz. These developments have triggered widespread demonstrations by Palestinians and Israeli peace activists, highlighting the importance of the settlement issue for the future exercise of Palestinian rights and the peace process itself.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to recall that the Security Council, in its resolution 465 (1980) of 1 March 1980 and other resolutions, determined that all measures taken by Israel to change the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure or status of the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, have no legal validity, are in violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, and constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The Committee considers that the growing expansion and consolidation of settlements create facts on the ground inconsistent with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which the current peace process seeks to implement, and seriously compromise the agreements reached between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. Noting the similar concerns expressed by the Council of the Arab League in its resolution of 5 January 1995 and by the Permanent Observer of Palestine in his letter to you of 9 January 1995 (A/49/824-S/1995/14), the Committee wishes to join them in appealing to you, to the Security Council, to the co-sponsors of the peace process and all others concerned to exert their influence on the Israeli Government to end its settlement policy, as an indispensable step towards the attainment of the just and lasting peace we are all working for.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 40, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kéba Birane CISSÉ
Chairman
Committee on the Exercise of
the Inalienable Rights of
the Palestinian People